

The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask

The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask^[a] is an action-adventure video game developed and published by Nintendo for the Nintendo 64. It was released in 2000 as the sixth main installment in *The Legend of Zelda* series and was the second to use 3D graphics, following 1998's *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. It featured slightly improved graphics and several gameplay changes from its predecessor. *Majora's Mask* is set in Termina, an alternate reality to Hyrule, where the Skull Kid has stolen Majora's Mask, a powerful ancient artifact. Under its influence, the Skull Kid causes the moon to slowly fall towards Termina, where it will crash after three days. The protagonist, Link, is forced to repeatedly travel back in time to the beginning of the three days to stop the moon from destroying the world.

The gameplay is centered on the perpetually repeating three-day cycle and use of various masks, some of which allow Link to transform into different beings. Link learns to play several melodies on his ocarina, which have a variety of effects, like controlling the flow of time or opening passages to four temples. Unlike *Ocarina of Time*, *Majora's Mask* requires the Expansion Pak, which provides enhanced graphics and more on-screen characters. Critics acclaimed *Majora's Mask*, praising the graphics and complex story. It is now considered to be one of the greatest video games ever made

Approximately 314,000 copies of the game were sold during its first week in Japan, and three million copies were sold worldwide. The game was rereleased for the GameCube as part of *The Legend of Zelda: Collector's Edition* in 2003, for the Wii's Virtual Console service in 2009, and for the Wii U's Virtual Console service in 2016. An enhanced remake for the Nintendo 3DS, titled *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D*, was released in February 2015.

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North American box art

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Publisher(s)	Nintendo
Director(s)	Eiji Aonuma Yoshiaki Koizumi
Producer(s)	Shigeru Miyamoto
Programmer(s)	Toshio Iwawaki Toshihiko Nakago
Artist(s)	Yusuke Nakano Takaya Imamura
Writer(s)	Mitsuhiro Takano Shigeru Miyamoto Yoshiaki Koizumi
Composer(s)	Koji Kondo
Series	<i>The Legend of Zelda</i>
Platform(s)	Nintendo 64, GameCube
Release	Nintendo 64 <div>JP: April 27, 2000</div> <div>NA: October 26, 2000</div> <div>PAL: November 17, 2000</div> GameCube <div>JP: November 7, 2003</div> <div>NA: November 17, 2003</div> <div>PAL: March 19, 2004</div>
	Action-adventure

Gameplay

Genre(s)

Mode(s)

Single-player

The gameplay of *Majora's Mask* expands on that of *Ocarina of Time*. It retains the concept of dungeon puzzles and ocarina songs and introduces character transformations and a three-day cycle. As in previous installments, Link can perform basic actions such as walking, running and limited jumping, and must use items to battle enemies and solve puzzles. Link's main weapon is the sword. Other weapons and items are available—Link can block or reflect attacks with a shield, stun enemies by throwing Deku Nuts, attack from a distance with a bow and arrow, and use bombs to destroy obstacles and damage enemies. He can also latch onto objects or paralyze enemies with the Hookshot. Magic power allows attacks such as magical arrows or spin attacks and the use of special items

Masks and transformations



Link in his Zora form

While the masks in *Ocarina of Time* are limited to an optional side-quest, they play a central role in *Majora's Mask*, which has twenty-four masks in total.^[1]

Link can transform at will into different creatures: the Deku Mask transforms Link into a Deku Scrub, the Goron Mask into a Goron, and the Zora Mask into a Zora.^[2] Each form features unique abilities: Deku Link can perform a spin attack, shoot bubbles, skip on water, and fly for a short time by launching from Deku Flowers; Goron Link can roll at high speeds (and grow spikes at higher speeds), punch with deadly force, stomp the ground with his massive, rock-like body, walk in lava without taking damage, and weigh down heavy switches; Zora Link can swim faster than normal Link, throw boomerang-like fins from his arms, generate a force field,

and walk on the bottoms of bodies of water. Many areas can be accessed only by use of these abilities.

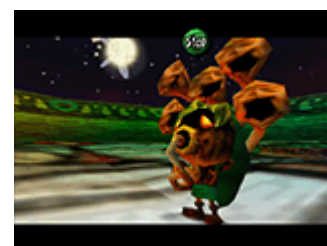
Link and his three transformations receive different reactions from non-player characters.^[3] For instance, Goron and Zora Link can exit Clock Town at will, but Deku Link is not permitted to leave due to his childlike appearance. Animals also interact differently to Link's four forms. They are indifferent to Link's normal form, attack Deku Link, are frightened by Goron Link, and chase Zora Link.

The final obtainable mask is the Fierce Deity's Mask. Although the use of this mask is strictly limited to boss battles, it is possible to wear it anywhere using a glitch. Upon donning this mask, Link grows to nearly two-and-a-half times his normal height and gains white clothes and war paint on his face. Fierce Deity Link's sword is helix-shaped and shoots beams at enemies.

Other masks provide situational benefits. For example, the Great Fairy's Mask helps retrieve stray fairies in the four temples, the Bunny Hood increases Link's movement speed, and the Stone Mask renders Link invisible to most non-playable characters and enemies. Less valuable masks are usually involved only in optional side-quests or specialized situations. Examples include the Postman's Hat, which grants Link access to items in mailboxes,^[4] and Kafei's Mask, which initiates a long side-quest to receive the Couple's Mask.^[5]

Three-day cycle and use of music

Majora's Mask imposes a time limit of three days (72 hours) in game-time,^[6] which is about 54 minutes in real time.^[7] An on-screen clock tracks the day and time. Link can return to 6:00 am of the first day by playing the Song of Time on the Ocarina of Time. If he does not before the 72 hours expire, then the moon will destroy Termina and Link will lose everything he accomplished during these three days. A real-time countdown will begin when only 6 hours remain.^[6] However, returning to the first day saves the player's progress and major accomplishments permanently, such as the collection of maps, masks, music, and weapons.^[8] Cleared puzzles, keys, and minor items will be lost, as well as any rupees not in the bank, and almost all characters will have no recollection of meeting Link.^[9] Link can slow down time or



Deku Link playing his mask-specific instrument, the deku pipes

warp to the next morning or evening by playing the Inverted Song of Time and the Song of Double Time. Owl statues scattered across certain major areas of the world allow the player to temporarily save their progress after activation and also provide warp points to quickly navigate the world.

Other uses for music include manipulating the weather, teleporting between owl statues spread throughout Termina, and unlocking the four temples. Each transformation mask uses a different instrument: Deku Link plays a multi-horn instrument called the "Deku Pipes", Goron Link plays a set of bongo drums tied around his waist, and Zora Link plays a guitar made from a large fish skeleton. Jackson Guitars created a limited edition 7-string replica of this guitar that was the grand prize in a contest in *Nintendo Power*, known as the "Jackson Zoraxe".^[10]

During the three-day cycle, many non-player characters follow fixed schedules that Link can track using the Bomber's Notebook.^[11] The notebook tracks the twenty characters in need of help,^[11] such as a soldier to whom Link delivers medicine and a couple whom Link reunites. Blue bars on the notebook's timeline indicate when characters are available for interaction, and icons indicate that Link has received items, such as masks, from the characters.^[11]

Synopsis

Setting and characters

The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask is set in Termina, a land parallel to Hyrule,^{[12][13]} the main setting of most *Zelda* games. According to legend, Termina was split into four areas by four magic giants that live in four regions of the land. At the center of Termina lies Clock Town, which features a large clock tower that counts down the days before the Carnival of Time—a festival where the people of Termina pray for good luck and harvests. Termina Field surrounds Clock Town; beyond lie a swamp, mountain range, bay, and canyon in each of the four cardinal directions.

The Southern Swamp contains the Deku Palace and the Woodfall Temple, an ancient shrine that contains monsters and a giant masked jungle warrior, Odolwa, who has been poisoning the swamp.

The Snowhead mountain range, north of Clock Town, is the site of the Goron village. Normally a lush pine forest region most of the year, the area has been experiencing an unusually long winter caused by the mechanical monster Oni in Snowhead Temple.

The western area of Termina, the Great Bay, is home to the Zora and Gerudo civilizations. A giant masked fish, Gyorg, is generating storms and contaminating the water surrounding the Great Bay Temple.

The desolate Ikana Canyon, to the east of Clock Town, is the site of a former kingdom. It is inhabited mainly by the undead, except for a ghost researcher and his daughter Pamela, as well as a thief named Sakon. Two giant masked insectoid serpents known as Twinmold are casting a dark aura from their nest in Stone Tower Temple, causing the corpses of former citizens and soldiers to be revived as undead monsters.

Romani Ranch, southwest of Clock Town, is the site of a ranch which houses Romani, her older sister, Cremia, Grog, and Mamamu Yan. In a sidequest, Link can help Romani protect the ranch's cows from being abducted by aliens.

At the end of the game, Link is transported to the moon, which is portrayed as a green field with a single, large tree in the centre with masked children playing underneath it.

Plot

Majora's Mask takes place a few months after *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*^[14] and begins with Link searching for his departed fairy, Navi.^[15] While riding through a forest in Hyrule on his horse Epona, Link is ambushed by the masked Skull Kid and his fairy allies Tatli and Tael, who steal both Epona and the Ocarina of Time. Link follows them down a dark cave and confronts the Skull Kid, who curses him by turning him into a Deku Scrub. Tatli stops Link from going after the Skull Kid as the latter escapes with Tael through a door, but is then separated from them when the door closes behind them. Realizing she needs Link's help to find them,

Tatl insists that they work together. Link follows the Skull Kid through the cave into the inside of the Clock Tower in the land of Termina. There, he meets the Happy Mask Salesman, who seemed to have been following him. The salesman offers to help Link heal his curse in exchange for retrieving the Ocarina of Time and the Majora's Mask from the Skull Kid. The Skull Kid, having stolen the Majora's Mask from the salesman, became possessed by its overwhelming power and transformed into an uncontrollable fiend who inflicts misfortune on others, the worst of which is an impending apocalypse: the moon is set to collide with Termina in three days.

From a gate inside Clock Tower, Link and Tatl enter Clock Town while its population prepares for the town's annual Carnival of Time, which will also take place in three days. Together they learn that the Skull Kid is waiting at the top of the tower, which is only accessible during the eve of the carnival. After conditions are met, Link and Tatl arrive at the top of the Clock Tower to witness Tael hurriedly speak a riddle to them: "Swamp. Mountain. Ocean. Canyon... hurry, the four who are there... bring them here!" Link is unable to fight the Skull Kid and cannot take the mask from him, but manages to retrieve the Ocarina of Time. After playing the Song of Time on the ocarina, Link and Tatl are brought backwards through time three days earlier—with the ocarina still in his possession and with both him and Tatl having complete memory of all that happened. Meeting with the Happy Mask Salesman again, he sees that Link has retrieved his ocarina, and teaches him the "Song of Healing", which returns Link to his human form and seals his Deku curse into a mask which can turn him back into a Deku Scrub if needed. After he finds out Link did not bring back the mask, he panics and explains that the mask conceals an evil, apocalyptic power that was once used by an ancient tribe in hexing rituals. The troubles caused by the mask were so great, that the ancient ones "sealed the mask in shadow forever" to prevent it from being misused. Link must then travel between the four cardinal regions of Termina: Woodfall, Snowhead, the Great Bay, and Ikana Canyon, for each region conceals one of the Four Giants who can halt the moon's crashing once reunited. At the same time, the Skull Kid has struck each region with a terrible curse which plagues its inhabitants and seals away its giant. To lift the curse and free the giants, Link must enter a dungeon in each region and defeat its boss, after doing so, obtaining the power to summon the giant he has set free. To accomplish this, he uses the Song of Healing to create a mask that can turn him into a Goron from the spirit of a deceased Goron hero, and a mask that can turn him into a Zora from the spirit of a brave deceased Zora.

With all four curses lifted, Link climbs on top of the Clock Tower at midnight on the third day to confront the Skull Kid again. He summons the Four Giants, who halt the moon's descent. Now seeing the Skull Kid as a useless puppet, Majora's Mask drops his grip on him and flies up to possess the moon instead. With Tatl at his side, Link follows Majora's Mask inside the moon and defeats him once and for all, returning the moon to its proper place in the sky.^[16] The Four Giants return to their sleep. Tatl and Tael reunite with the newly liberated Skull Kid. The Happy Mask Salesman takes Majora's Mask, stating it has been purified of its evil power. Link rides away on Epona while the people of Termina celebrate the Carnival of Time and the dawn of a new day. Tatl breaks down crying as she watches her friend leave.

The game ends with a post-credits scene depicting Link and Epona back in the mysterious forest, resuming Link's search for his friend, as they ride off towards a mysterious light breaking through the thick forest. A drawing on a tree stump of Link, Tatl, Tael, the Skull Kid, and the Four Giants is shown after

Development

Following the release of *Link's Awakening* in 1993, fans waited five years for *Ocarina of Time*, the active development of which took four years. By re-using the game engine and graphics from *Ocarina of Time*, a smaller team required only one year to finish *Majora's Mask*.^[17] According to director Eiji Aonuma, they were "faced with the very difficult question of just what kind of game could follow *Ocarina of Time* and its worldwide sales of seven million units", and as a solution, came up with the three-day system to "make the game data more compact while still providing deep gameplay".^[18] Shigeru Miyamoto and Yoshiaki Koizumi came up with the story that served as the basis for the script written by Mitsuhiro Takano.^{[19][20][21]} The idea of the "three-day system" came from Miyamoto and Koizumi.^[22]

Majora's Mask first appeared in the media in May 1999, when *Famitsu* stated that a long-planned *Zelda* expansion for the 64DD was underway in Japan. This project was tentatively titled "*Ura Zelda*" ("ura" translates roughly to "hidden" or "behind"). This expansion would take *Ocarina of Time* and alter the level designs, similar to how the "master quest" expanded upon the original *Legend of*

Zelda.^[23] In June, Nintendo announced that "*Zelda: Gaiden*", which roughly translates to "*Zelda: Side Story*", would appear as a playable demo at the Nintendo Space World exhibition on August 27, 1999.^{[24][25]} The media assumed that *Zelda: Gaiden* was the new working title for *Ura Zelda*.^[24]

Screenshots of *Zelda: Gaiden* released in August 1999 show unmistakable elements of the final version of *Majora's Mask*, such as the large clock that dominates the center of Clock Town, the timer at the bottom of the screen, and the Goron Mask.^{[26][27]} Story and gameplay details revealed later that month show that the story concept as well as the use of transformation masks were already in place.^{[27][28]}

That same month, Miyamoto confirmed that *Ura Zelda* and *Zelda: Gaiden* were separate projects.^{[29][30]} It was unclear if *Zelda: Gaiden* was an offshoot of *Ura Zelda* or if the two were always separate. *Ura Zelda* might have become *Ocarina of Time Master Quest* outside Japan, and was released on a bonus disc for the GameCube given to those who pre-ordered *The Wind Waker* in the US^[31] and bundled with the GameCube game in Europe.^[32]

In November, Nintendo announced a "Holiday 2000" release date for *Zelda: Gaiden*.^[33] By March 2000, what ultimately became the final titles were announced: *Zelda no Densetsu Mujura no Kamen* in Japan and *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask* elsewhere.^[34]

Technical differences from *Ocarina of Time*

Majora's Mask runs on an upgraded version of the engine used in *Ocarina of Time* and requires the use of the 4 MB Expansion Pak, making it one of the three games that require said peripheral (*Donkey Kong 64* and *Perfect Dark* are the others).^[7] IGN theorizes this requirement is due to *Majora's Mask*'s possible origin as a Nintendo 64DD game, which would necessitate an extra 4 MB of RAM.^[7] The use of the Expansion Pak allows for greater draw distances, more accurate dynamic lighting, more detailed texture mapping and animation, complex framebuffer effects such as motion blur, and more characters displayed on-screen.^[7] This expanded draw distance allows the player to see much farther and eliminates the need for the fog effect and "cardboard panorama" seen in *Ocarina of Time*, which were used to obscure distant areas.^[7] IGN considered the texture design to be one of the best created for the Nintendo 64, saying that although some textures have a low resolution, they are "colorful and diverse", which gives each area "its own unique look".^[7] Lastly, building interiors are rendered in real-time, unlike the fixed 3D display featured in *Ocarina of Time*.



The 4 MB Expansion Pak is required to run *Majora's Mask*

Music

The music was composed primarily by Koji Kondo, with three tracks written by Toru Minegishi.^[35] The soundtrack largely consists of reworked music from *Ocarina of Time*, complemented with other traditional *Zelda* music such as the "Overworld Theme" and new material.^{[7][36]} Kondo describes the music as having "an exotic Chinese-opera sound".^[37] As the three-day cycle progresses, the theme song of Clock Town changes between three variations, one for each day.^[38] IGN relates the shift in music to a shift in the game's atmosphere, saying that the quickened tempo of the Clock Town music on the second day conveys a sense of time passing quickly.^[7] The soundtrack was released on June 23, 2000,^[39] featuring 112 tracks from the game over two compact discs.

Nintendo 3DS version

After the release of *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D*, a remake of *Ocarina of Time* for the Nintendo 3DS, director Eiji Aonuma suggested that a *Majora's Mask* remake was "not an impossibility", depending on interest and demand.^[40] Following this news, a fan campaign called "Operation Moonfall" was launched to promote the remake of *Majora's Mask* on the 3DS.^[41] The campaign name is a reference to a similar fan-based movement, Operation Rainfall, set up to persuade Nintendo of America to release a trio of role-playing video games for the Wii.^[41] The petition reached 10,000 signatures within five days.^[42] In response to the feedback, Nintendo of America released a statement: "At the risk of dampening the excitement you feel, I must be clear that no official announcements have been made regarding a remake of *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask* for the Nintendo 3DS. However,

we like hearing what our consumers find important."^[43] In an interview with GamesRadar in November 2011, *Zelda* producer Eiji Aonuma acknowledged Operation Moonfall and told fans that he hopes to respond to their request sometime in the future.^[44] At E3 2012, Miyamoto stated that a 3D remake was still under consideration.^[45] Once again, shortly after E3 2013, Miyamoto commented that the fans supporting a*Majora's Mask* 3D remake were "still in his memory"^[46]

On November 5, 2014, Nintendo announced in its Nintendo Direct presentation that *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D* would be released for the Nintendo 3DS in the Northern Hemisphere in spring 2015. Like *Ocarina of Time 3D*, the remake features improved character models and stereoscopic 3D graphics, along with altered boss battles and an additional fishing minigame.^[47] A special edition featuring a pin badge, double-sided poster and steelbook, was released in Europe.^[48]

Reception

Approximately 314,000 copies of *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask* were sold during its first week on sale in Japan,^[58] ultimately with 3.36 million copies sold worldwide.^[59]

Like its predecessor, *Majora's Mask* garnered critical praise. The game has a score of 95/100 on review aggregator Metacritic, indicating "universal acclaim".^[49] Game Informer called the three-day cycle "one of the most inventive premises in all of gaming," and also stated that "[w]ithout question, *Majora's Mask* is the finest adventure the Nintendo 64 has to offer."^[54] It is often regarded as the darkest and most original game in the *Legend of Zelda* series. Edge magazine referred to *Majora's Mask* as "the oddest, darkest and saddest of all *Zelda* games."^[60] Opinions were favorable regarding how the game compares with predecessor *Ocarina of Time*, often cited as one of greatest video games of all time.^[61] N64 Magazine ended their review by saying, "it was told that *Majora's Mask* should cower in the shadow of *Ocarina of Time*. Instead, it shines just as brightly," awarding the game 96%.^[56] GameSpot said the game was much more difficult than its predecessor.^[36] IGN described *Majora's Mask* as "*The Empire Strikes Back* of Nintendo 64...it's the same franchise, but it's more intelligent, darker, and tells a much better storyline."^[7] GamePro characterized the story as "surreal and spooky, deep, and intriguing"^[62] and the game as "living proof that the N64 still has its magic."^[62] It has been ranked the seventh-greatest game by *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, whereas *Ocarina of Time* was ranked eighth.^[63] *Majora's Mask* placed 68th on *Game Informer's* "Top 100 Games of All Time" in 2001^[64] and 63rd on their "Top 200 Games of All Time" in 2009.^[65] Nintendo Power rated it the fifteenth-best game on a Nintendo console.^[66] The game placed 45th in Official Nintendo Magazine's 100 greatest Nintendo games of all time.^[67] GameFAQs users ranked *Majora's Mask* 47th in a list of 100 best games of all-time in 2005.^[68]

Reception	
Aggregate score	
Aggregator	Score
Metacritic	95/100 ^[49]
Review scores	
Publication	Score
<i>Edge</i>	9/10 ^[50]
<i>EGM</i>	10/10 ^[51]
<i>Famitsu</i>	37/40 ^{[52][53]}
<i>Game Informer</i>	9.75/10 ^[54]
<i>GamesMaster</i>	96% ^[55]
<i>GameSpot</i>	8.3/10 ^[36]
<i>GameZone</i>	9.9/10 ^[55]
<i>IGN</i>	9.9/10 ^[7]
<i>N64 Magazine</i>	96/100 ^[56]
<i>Nintendo Power</i>	9.4/10 ^[38]
<i>GMR</i>	10/10 ^[55]
Awards	
Publication	Award
Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences	Action Game of the Year (2000)
GameFAQs	Game of the Decade (2000–2009) ^[57]

A common criticism of *Majora's Mask* is that it is not as accessible as *Ocarina of Time*. GameSpot, which awarded *Ocarina of Time* a 10/10, gave *Majora's Mask* an 8.3/10, writing that some might "find the focus on minigames and side quests tedious and slightly out of place."^[36] *Game Revolution* wrote that it "takes a little longer to get into this *Zelda*", but also that "there are moments when the game really hits you with all its intricacies and mysteries, and that makes it all worthwhile."^[69]

On December 24, 2010, *Majora's Mask* was voted as the *Game of the Decade* (2000–2009) by *GameFAQs*, beating out *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*, which had beaten *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* two rounds prior.^[70]

On May 19, 2011, in a *tournament* style competition hosted by IGN, *Majora's Mask* was voted the second best *Zelda* game of all time, behind only *Ocarina of Time*. It beat *Four Swords Adventures* in Round 1, *A Link to the Past* in Round 2, and *Twilight Princess* in Round 3 before losing to *Ocarina of Time* in the final round.^[71]

Legacy

In 2003, Nintendo rereleased *Majora's Mask* on the *GameCube* as part of *The Legend of Zelda: Collector's Edition*, a special promotional disc which also contained three other *The Legend of Zelda* games and a twenty-minute demo of *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*.^[72] This disc came bundled with a GameCube console, as part of a subscription offer to *Nintendo Power* magazine, or through Nintendo's official website.^[73] The offer expired in early 2004.

Similar to other GameCube rereleases, the games are emulations of the originals by the GameCube hardware.^[72] The only differences are minor adjustments to button icons to conform to the GameCube's controller. *Majora's Mask* also boots with a disclaimer that some of the original sounds from the game may cause problems due to their emulation.^[72] Aside from these deliberate changes, GameSpot's Ricardo Torres found that the frame rate "appears choppy" and notes inconstant audio.^[74] The GameCube version also features a slightly higher native resolution than its Nintendo 64 counterpart, as well as progressive scan.^[72]

Majora's Mask was released on the *Wii*'s *Virtual Console* service in Europe and Australia on April 3, 2009,^[75] and Japan on April 7, 2009.^[76] It was later released in North America on May 18, 2009, and commemorated as the 300th Virtual Console game available for purchase in the region.^[77] During January 2012, *Club Nintendo* members could download *Majora's Mask* onto the *Wii* Console for 150 coins.^[78] A similar deal was offered at the end of *Club Nintendo*.^[79] The game was released for the *Wii U*'s Virtual Console service in Europe on June 23, 2016^[80] and in North America on November 24, 2016.^[81]

A *Majora's Mask*-themed stage based on the Great Bay Coast area of the game titled "Great Bay" appears in *Super Smash Bros. Melee* and returns in *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate*.^[82]

Notes

- a. Known in Japan as *Zeruda no Densetsu: Mujura no Kamen* (ゼルダの伝説 ムジュラの仮面)

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- Official website

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